



## **Safe Drinking Water**

### **Fact Sheet**

Parish Sanitarians currently conduct EPA required public water system (PWS) monitoring (sample collection and chlorine residual measurement) and the Public Health Laboratory analyses samples for bacterial contamination. The samples are taken on a regular schedule at designated sample taps. Additional investigative samples are taken for water system outages and loss of disinfection events. These samples are collected and analyzed on paper forms. Electronic recordkeeping is required by EPA and must be hand entered by Safe Drinking Water personnel currently into database.

All PWS systems are monitored for bacteria, viruses and chlorine residual, because lack of monitoring could result in illness and deaths (lack of chlorine = growth of bacteria or viruses = illness and deaths from giardia, cryptosporidium, cholera, diphtheria, etc.).

Outcome goals are no hospitalizations or deaths from contaminated drinking water in Louisiana. A safe and abundant supply of drinking water is necessary for economic growth and public confidence.

### **Performance Indicators**

- # of deaths from bacteriological contamination in drinking water
- # hospitalized due to bacteriological contamination in drinking water
- % systems monitored for bacteriological compliance

### **Narrative**

Parish Sanitarians currently conduct EPA required public water system monitoring (sample collection and chlorine residual measurement) as mandated by State Law (Louisiana Revised Statute 40:5.6. The chlorine residual samples are instantaneous and must be taken by trained personnel. The bacteriological samples are analyzed by the Public Health Laboratory and the results are transmitted to the public and to EPA. Example: in 2007 a total of 61,238

bacteriological samples were collected and sent for analysis to the Public Health Laboratory from a total of 1,481 public water systems.

The Public Health Laboratory analyses samples for bacterial contamination. The samples are taken on a regular schedule at designated sample taps. Additional investigative samples are taken for water system outages and loss of disinfection events. Systems are kept on Boil Advisory until system flushes and chlorinates and no bacteria are found in samples analyzed.

Vigilance is maintained on potential bacteriological contamination of water supplies. This system keeps people from dying of contaminated drinking water. A contaminated system can cause severe illness and deaths in hundreds or thousands of people in a short period of time (Alamosa, Colorado in Spring 2008 had hundreds of people sickened and at least one death from contaminated drinking water. Hospitalizations of many people were maintained for months after exposure. Economic and personal losses were significant.

## **Better Health**

Every person bathes in, drinks, cooks, or washes with water. This water must be safe. The population served is >5.4 Million people/year from 1,400 public water systems). There would be little economic development or tourism in Louisiana without a plentiful, safe supply of potable water, which Louisiana currently has and some other states do not have. Protection of the drinking water is imperative.

The sanitarians work with the public water systems, with Engineering Services and with the Public Health Laboratory to quickly collect samples in case of emergency or to collect routine samples to protect public safety.

The value is that people no longer die or are hospitalized from poor quality drinking water, because of consistent monitoring by DHH. Expanded value is to keep water safe in the pipelines, alert public to problems, take samples, analyze and report the results accurately and rapidly to EPA and the public.

This program is delegated to Louisiana DHH Engineering Services by EPA under Federal Authority: 42 U.S.C. 300f, *et seq.* (Safe Drinking Water Act); Regulations 40 CFR Parts 141-143.

- State Authority: L.R.S. 40:5(5),(6)&(20); 40:5.6-9; 40:6; 40:8; 40:31.33
- State Regulation: LAC 51: Part I Gen Provisions and Part XII Water Supplies.
- Links to programs are: [www.epa.gov/safewater](http://www.epa.gov/safewater), Center for Environmental Health : <http://www.dhh.louisiana.gov/offices/?ID=242>, DHH-OPH Engineering Services: <http://www.dhh.louisiana.gov/offices/?ID=204>, Safe Drinking Water: <http://www.dhh.louisiana.gov/offices/?id=238>.